

## **Relationship between Student Motivation Practices and Retention in Public Secondary Schools in Kisii County, Kenya**

### **Authors**

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### **Abstract**

The study aimed to establish the relationship between student motivation practices and students retention in public secondary schools in Kisii County, Kenya. The study was guided by Vroom's expectancy and McGregor's X and Y theories. A conceptual framework involving the variables under investigation was drawn at the end of the literature review. The survey research design was employed in conducting the study. The study was conducted in Kisii County. The target population was 354 Public Secondary Schools with a population of 115,683 composed of Principals, Deputy Principals, Students and School Head Cooks. A sample of 35 Public Secondary Schools was selected for the study using a Multi-stage sampling technique. The study sample was 525 respondents comprised of 420 students, 35 Deputy Principals, 35 Principals and 35 Head Cooks. Questionnaires, document analysis and interview schedules were used in data collection. Reliability of the instruments was tested using split-half technique and Spearman-Brown prophecy formula. A coefficient of 0.8 in both the students' and Deputy Principals' questionnaires was obtained. Inferential and descriptive statistics were used in analysing quantitative data, while qualitative data was analyzed thematically. From the findings, there was a strong and positive correlation between student motivation practices and retention in public secondary schools ( $r=0.717$ ). Tables, pie charts, bar graphs and textual forms were used in presenting the findings. This study was significant because it provides new knowledge on how secondary school principals can improve student management practices to improve student retention.

**Key Terms:** Student Motivation Practices, Principals, Retention rate, Public Secondary Schools

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## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

Othman (2016) posits that in the current competitive and globalized education, the reputational fall-out of low student retention can be damaging to institutions of learning. Thus student retention is a global challenge that must be managed accordingly for institutions to continue enjoying high reputation world over. As such, global trends in the acquisition of quality education has caused debates on the best student managerial practices which schools should adopt for effective curriculum delivery and improved retention rates (Abdulhakim, 2015).

In China, students are not retained in schools due to lack of motivation for continued study among the school-age children (Beh, & Yao, 2014). In Argentina, Elena (2015), in a study aimed at addressing social gaps in society through education noted that, the problem of student retention in schools still exist. In Korea, student retention rates have been reported to be low and significant strides have been made to increase these rates (Organization for Economic Co-Operation and Development [OECD], 2016). In Lesotho, challenges of poverty, HIV/AIDS, parental level of education, among other factors, posed a significant challenge when it comes to retention of learners in schools (Aikman, & Unterhalter, 2015). Since independence, the Kenyan Government has been playing a vital role in the provision of quality to her citizens' education (Barasa, & Ngugi, 2014). However, globally education institutions face challenges of effective management which do not facilitate retention of students in public secondary schools (Mutinda, 2015).

In Kenya, many schools experience low retention rates of learners due to student managerial problems (Bryk, 2016; Republic of Kenya, 2017). A study done by Yambo and Tuitoek (2014) in Kisumu District on the effects of principals' decision making in the management of secondary schools, observed that high performing schools have increased student retention and that they are controlled by principals who practice acceptable management practices. Due to poor student management practices, Kenyan schools have witnessed principals being humiliated and ejected from schools due to allegations of poor student management practices (Oteba, 2018).

Although the Kenyan government is providing direct grants to secondary schools through Free Day Secondary Education funding, student retention in schools continue to be low (Orodho, et al., 2014). Thus, retention of learners in schools is a significant concern of the government and various education stakeholders in Kenya. As noted by Fernandez and Mateso (2015), when student retention is low, the country fails to achieve Education for All (EFA) as outlined in her Basic Education Act (Republic of Kenya, 2013). Though student retention is a challenge everywhere in Kenya, in Kisii County, it has been a perennial challenge over the years, and this has raised a lot of concern of many education stakeholders (Obure, 2013). In many open discussion fora on education standards, many scholars have observed that student retention rate in Kisii County is low (Nyagosia, 2010; Ogari, 2010). The problem of low student retention rate in many Public Secondary Schools in Kisii County necessitated this study.

Nationally, students' retention rate at secondary school level stands at 90 per cent (Republic of Kenya, 2017) while in Kisii County, the ratio stands at 67 per cent against the expected retention rate of 100 per cent (Kisii County Director of Education's [CDE's] Office, Kisii 2018). A report from Kisii County Education Conference (Kisii County Government, 2014) indicated that there is a need for research on the causes of the low retention rate of learners in Public Secondary Schools in Kisii County. Another report by Omae, et al. (2017) asserts that, policies addressing students' retention in Public Secondary Schools in Kisii County, have not been adequately adhered to

by principals. Consequently, even though significant strides have been made by the Government of Kenya to improve learners' retention rates in Public Secondary schools through subsidized Free Day Secondary Education (FDSE) Programme, the retention rates of learners are still low in Kisii County as shown in Table 1.

**Table 1: Students' Retention Rate in Public Secondary Schools in Kisii County for the Period 2014-2018**

Year	Form 1	Form 2	Form 3	Form 4	Total	Retention Rate
2014	31,511	25,052	21,303	15,550	93,416	-
2015	35,799	28,476	21,906	16,423	102,604	90%
2016	34,046	30,194	24,119	18,081	106,440	76%
2017	54,886	30,589	25,489	18,837	129,801	60%
2018	51,115	38,339	25,268	23,985	133,621	67 %

Source: Statistics from Kisii County Education Office (2018).

Therefore, the recommendations of the Kisii County Education Conference (2014) and the persistent trend of low students' retention in Public Secondary Schools in Kisii County prompted the researcher to carry out this study to investigate the relationship between student motivation practices and students retention in Public Secondary Schools in Kisii County, Kenya.

## 2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

Louis, Anderson and Campell (2006) affirm that on matters of student retention, the focus should be on motivational and learning factors as the key determinants of retention in a school. Fuller and Clarke (2014) concur by noting that school principals should employ a variety of means in motivating learners to retain them in the school. Acceptable student management practices in a school make learners feel motivated and enthusiastic (Republic of Kenya, 2014). How students' issues are addressed by the school management, determines the retention rate of learners in the school (Kathryn, 2015). Onderi and Makori (2013) noted that disharmonious student management practices could have a negative impact in the school climate with the resultant effect of losing dedication, discipline and motivation in both the teachers, students and parents. This leads to reduced student retention rate. According to the Republic of Kenya (2017), students' interest concerning a school is strongly influenced by the motivation practices in the school.

When the school staff is enthusiastic and rewarding to the learners, the learners feel motivated and eager to remain in school (Justine, & Julie, 2013). Sirima and Poipoi (2010) and Gunram (2011) also noted in their findings that rewards to students motivated them to work better and to remain in school. In this current study, it was also observed that student motivation practices had a positive relationship with the retention of students in Public Secondary Schools in Kisii County.

Student motivation practices in the form of allowing democratic participation by all school stakeholders influenced the learners' retention rate in the school, positively. A study by Ratego (2015) highlighted that the democratic leadership style motivated teachers and learners in schools. To stress the importance of democratic participation by students in schools, Koech (2013) noted that a school could prosper if the children understand, appreciate and practice democracy practices from their early stages. At the school level, democratic participation was viewed from the way the teachers involved the learners in decision making, such as choosing their student

leaders, frequent meetings and constant communication as guided by Hoy and Miskel (2015). As noted by Gunram (2011), when the school teaching staff allows democratic participation by all in the school, learners feel recognized and motivated, leading to improved retention in the school. In this study, it was observed that democratic participation of learners and other school stakeholders encouraged learners, thus improving their retention in Public Secondary Schools in Kisii County.

To motivate learners in a school, the teachers should listen and act on their concerns appropriately (Mulford, 2013). Therefore, the school teaching staff should encourage their learners by showing them good care and love (Finn, & Achilles, 2017). They should promote frequent dialogue through such forum as the school Barraza. This makes the learners become part of the system, thereby improving their retention rate in the school (Adamec, 2014). Derrick (2017) asserts that a lot of respect is earned when the school principal proves that he/she is consistent and firm when dealing with learners' issues in the school. Teachers should never apply double standards but instead should listen and act on students' concerns without discrimination or prejudice (Morin, 2017). This study was geared towards examining the relationship between the school Barraza and the retention of students in Public Secondary Schools in Kisii County, Kenya.

School teachers can also motivate learners through the use of field trips. Field trips are educational tools that connect classroom teaching and real-world situations. Behrendt and Franklin (2014) maintain that learning during field trips increases students' interest, knowledge and Motivation. For Wanjiku (2016), field trips provide an excellent recess out of school and allow the learners to explore new things away from the classroom. Wanjiku (2016) further says that, for students who are active learners, educational trips provide a way of bringing classroom lessons to real life, making it tangible and easy to understand (Patrick, et al., 2014). In a school, learners should be encouraged to make fair use of leisure time as a way of motivating them. Leisure is a free-willed act that people choose to do during their free time (Rop, 2013). It is freedom from the demands of work or duty. Joyce (2015) noted that leisure makes people feel more positive and motivated. At the school level, leisure is essential in the life of the learners because it contributes to their personal development. It also helps them to re-energize, relax and feel motivated to stay in school (Mwangi, 2015; Rop, 2013).

Consequently, school principals should organize appropriate leisure programs for the learners so that they can reduce stress and improve their retention (UN Youth Report, 2015). The influence of leisure time on retention of students in public day secondary schools in Kisii County has not been adequately investigated. This study examined the relationship between leisure time and the retention of students in Public Secondary Schools in Kisii County, Kenya.

Another aspect of student motivation practice is in the area of student reinforcement. Laura (2010) posited that support motivates students to stay in school and learn. In a study in Bongaon; Northern 24 Parganas- India, by Hoque (2013), it was observed that reinforcement plays a crucial role in the learning process. The findings of this study indicated that learning occurs quickly if every correct response is rewarded, but it is forgotten easily when reinforcement is stopped. In another research by Ellen (2017a) on how teachers can reinforce students, it was revealed that support is effective in improving student achievement and retention rate. Consequently, the principal should encourage teachers to use reinforcement more often to maintain a positive learning environment (Taurozzi, 2015). Though studies have been done on student reinforcement, limited studies have been carried out to investigate the influence of student reinforcement, on the retention rate



of students in Public Secondary Schools in Kisii County. The scanty literature on the relationship between student reinforcement and the retention of students in Public Secondary Schools in Kisii County, Kenya prompted this study.

To motivate learners in a school, teachers ought to be good role models to the learners, in and outside school (Sabol, & Pianta, 2012). Marie and Marlene (2017) define a role model as a person who inspires and encourages another to strive for greatness, live to the fullest potential and see the best in them. Anybody can be a role model; a parent, sibling, a friend, a neighbour among many others, but the most influential and life-changing role models are teachers (Bateman & Zeithaml, 2013; Karima, 2014). These scholars say, at six to eight hours a day, five days in a week and day to day encounters with students, teachers are poised to be the most influential people in the students' life. Brian (2015) noted that students not only watch their teachers but also begin to act like them. Sheila (2017) posits that teachers need to take their actions and behaviours seriously as they mingle and interact with their learners. Since the relationship between teachers acting as good role models and the retention of students in Public Secondary Schools in Kisii County had not been adequately investigated, this paved the way for this study.

The student motivation practices can also be enhanced through the way the teachers handle their learners. A good teacher should never carry over past problems of the child to the present (Sarah-Marie, 2010). A child should not be exposed to feelings of neglect as this may demotivate him/her leading to drop out of school. Kail (2011) noted that when a child has not been provided with the correct amount of care, the child is bound to feel neglected and out of place. However, children should be left to learn responsibility, and whenever they make mistakes, teachers should resolve those mistakes immediately and never be carried over to the present situation (Jessica, 2013). This means that, when the school principal encourages teachers to be free with their students, the students feel motivated and could want to stay in school till completion (Wolf, 2012). In view of the above, there was limited literature on how the carry-over effect of the students' past mistakes influenced their retention rate in Public Secondary Schools in Kisii County. This necessitated the need for this study.

### 3.0 RESULTS

#### Relationship between Student Motivation Practices and Student Retention in Public Secondary Schools

The researcher further sought to establish the relationship between student motivation Practices and student retention from the students by the use of a questionnaire. A total of 369 students participated in the study. The responses from the students' questionnaires are tabulated in Table 2.

**Table 2: Students' Responses on Motivation Practices and Student Retention in Schools (N=369)**

There is a positive relationship between the following motivation practices and student retention in my school	SD		D		A		SA		Mean	SD
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%		

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Verbal encouragement by teachers on a good performance in academic work	8	2.17	36	9.77	166	44.99	159	43.09	3.29	0.88
Material rewards for doing better in all areas in the school	17	4.61	6	1.62	209	56.63	137	37.13	3.26	0.74
Teachers acting as role models in the school	13	3.52	41	11.11	206	55.83	109	29.54	3.11	0.89
Motivating learners while teaching	11	1.98	23	6.23	158	31.46	225	60.98	3.72	0.27
Allowing democratic participation by all in the school	15	4.07	29	7.85	175	47.43	130	40.65	2.99	1.01
Giving prizes to all stakeholders	22	5.96	14	3.79	203	55.01	130	35.23	3.19	0.80
Encouraging the spirit of teamwork in the school	9	2.44	23	6.23	239	64.77	98	26.56	3.15	0.84
Acting on issues raised by learners and other stakeholders about the school	15	4.07	36	9.77	191	51.76	127	34.41	3.16	0.30
Encouraging educational trips by learners	9	2.44	17	4.61	154	41.73	189	51.21	3.39	0.83
Encouraging fair use of leisure time in the school	5	1.36	32	8.67	122	33.06	210	56.91	3.44	1.1
Teachers not carrying over learners' past problems to the present	43	5.97	17	4.61	196	53.11	134	36.31	3.25	0.54
Discouraging gender stereotypes in the school	20	5.42	41	11.11	185	49.05	123	34.33	3.11	0.88
Encouraging parents to attend school functions	17	4.61	6	1.62	197	53.38	149	40.37	3.29	0.62

Encouraging school barazas where students air their concerns about the school	9	2.44	26	7.04	225	60.97	109	29.54	3.17	0.82
Encouraging general cleanliness of the school premises	19	5.14	45	12.19	207	56.09	98	26.56	3.04	0.95

According to Table 2, a total of 88.08 per cent of the respondents agreed and strongly agreed that verbal encouragement by teachers on a good performance in academic work was related to student retention in Public Secondary Schools in Kisii County, Kenya. However, 11.92 per cent of the students disagreed and strongly disagreed that there was no relationship between verbal encouragement and student retention. When asked if material rewards to do better in all areas in the school had any ties with retention of students, a total of 93.76 per cent of the respondents agreed and strongly agreed that material rewards had a relationship with retention of students. Those who disagreed and strongly disagreed with the practice were 6.24 per cent of the respondents. This finding supports the works of Onderi and Makori (2013). They noted that disharmonious student management practices harm the school climate with the resultant effect of losing dedication, discipline and motivation in both the teachers, students and parents. This could lead to reduced student retention rate.

The researcher also sought to determine the relationship between teachers acting as role models in the school and the retention of students. When students were asked about this particular practice, those who agreed and strongly agreed that there was a relationship between role modelling and student retention were a total of 85.37 per cent of the respondents. However, this notwithstanding 14.63 per cent of the respondents disagreed and strongly disagreed on the practice. On motivating learners while teaching, 92.44 per cent of the respondents agreed and strongly agreed that there existed a relationship between motivating learners while education and retention of students. Those who disagreed and strongly disagreed with the practice comprised of 7.56 per cent. This study finding corroborates findings of Mulford (2013) who contend that to motivate learners in a school, the teachers should listen and act on their concerns appropriately. About democratic participation on student retention, the majority of the students (82.66 per cent) agreed and strongly agreed that there was a relationship between the two variables. Those who disagreed and strongly disagreed with the practice consisted of 17.34 per cent of the respondents.

From the information in Table 2, it is noted that allowing democratic participation by all in the school was the least motivational practice that correlated with student retention as represented by the lowest mean of 2.99 and a standard deviation of 1.01. This was contrary to a study by Koech (2013) who noted that a school could prosper if the children understand, appreciate and practice democracy practices from their early stages. At the school level, democratic participation was viewed from the way the teachers involved the learners in decision making, such as choosing their student leaders, frequent meetings and constant communication as guided by Hoy and Miskel (2015). As noted by Gunram (2011), when the school teaching staff allows democratic participation by all in the school, learners feel recognized and motivated, leading to improved retention in the school.

A total of 90.24 per cent of the students who agreed and strongly agreed that giving prizes to all stakeholders had a relationship with student retention in the school. Those who disagreed and strongly disagreed with the practice that there was no relationship between giving prizes and student retention were 9.76 per cent of the students. On encouraging the spirit of teamwork in the school, the majority of the students comprising of 91.33 per cent agreed and strongly agreed that there was a relationship between the two variables. Those of the contrary opinion was 8.67 per cent. This implies that secondary schools where school administration encouraged the spirit of teamwork, there was a higher retention rate as compared to secondary schools without the spirit of cooperation. About acting promptly on the issues raised by the learners and other stakeholders about the school, a total of 86.17 per cent of students agreed and strongly agreed that there was a relationship between the two variables. This is compatible with the works of Kathryn (2015), who contends that how students' issues are addressed by the school management, determines the retention rate of learners in the school.

When asked about encouraging educational trips for the learners, 92.94 per cent of the responses indicated they agreed and strongly agreed that there existed a relationship between educational trips and student retention. Those who disagreed and strongly disagreed with the practice were only 7.06 per cent. This shows that educational trips can impact positively on the students' retention in the school as attested by the high mean of 3.39 and a standard deviation of 0.83 in Table 2. On encouraging fair use of leisure time in the school, a total of 89.97 per cent of the respondent agreed and strongly agreed that there was a relationship. Table 2 reports that encouraging fair use of leisure time in the school was a critical motivational practice as portrayed by the high mean of 3.44 and a standard deviation of 1.1. This study finding is consistent with the works of Rop (2013) who points out that in a school, learners should be encouraged to make fair use of leisure time as a way of motivating them.

On the practice of teachers not carrying over learners' past problems to the present, 89.42 per cent of the students agreed and strongly agreed that the practice had a relationship with retention of students. Those who disagreed and strongly disagreed with the practice were only 10.58 per cent. When asked if discouraging gender stereotypes in the school had any correlation with student retention in secondary schools, majority of the students (82.38 per cent) agreed and strongly agreed that there was a relationship. On encouraging parents to attend school functions on the retention rate of students, a total of 93.75 per cent of the students agreed and strongly agreed that it was related to student retention in schools. Only 6.25 per cent disagreed and strongly disagreed with the practice's relationship with retention of students. The use of school barazas by students to air their concerns about the school freely was supported by 86.51 per cent of the respondents. Those who disagreed and strongly disagreed that there was no relationship were composed of 13.49 per cent. The findings of this study are consistent with the study by Ademec (2014) who observes that dialogue in schools through encouraging student Barazas as a forum to air their concerns is a significant way of improving retention rates. The study had a purpose of establishing the relationship between student motivation practices and the students' retention in Public Secondary Schools in Kisii County, Kenya, by doing a correlation analysis using Pearson correlation Coefficient. The result of the correlation analysis between Students' retention in Public Secondary Schools and Student Motivation Practices is shown in Table 3.



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**Table 3: Correlation Analysis between Student Motivation Practices and Retention**

Pearson correlation (r)	Student motivational practices	Student retention
Pearson correlation	.717**	1
Sig. (2-tailed)	.0001	.
N	466	
** Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)		

Pearson Correlation Coefficient shown in Table 3 indicates that there was a positive and robust relationship between Student retention (dependent variable) and Student Motivational Practices (independent variable), ( $r = .717$ ,  $p\text{-value} < 0.05$ ) in Public Secondary Schools in Kisii County, Kenya. Since the  $p\text{-value}$  is less than the level of significance of 0.05, the correlation was deemed to be significant.

### Regression Analysis of Student Motivation Practices

Since there was a major relationship between the student motivation practices and retention of students in public secondary schools in Kisii County, Kenya, it was necessary to conduct a regression analysis. The predictive capacity of student motivation practices on the retention of students in public secondary schools in Kisii County, Kenya, was given by calculating the coefficient of determination ( $R^2$ ). The coefficient of determination shows the proportion of variation in the dependent variable as a result of the changes in the independent variables. The summary of the regression model is shown in Table 4

**Table 4: Model Regression Coefficients**

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		t	Sig.	Co linearity Statistics	
	$\beta$	Std. Error				
Constant	1.553					
Student motivation practices	.157	.022	7.092	.0001		

Note. a. Dependent Variable: Retention

b. Independent variable: Student Motivation Practices

The values for the regression weights are as follows:

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \varepsilon$$

Whereby, Y= Dependent variable (Retention of students)

$\beta_0$ = Constant (Y Intercept)

$\beta_1$ = Model parameters (regression coefficients or change in Y)

$X_1$ = Student motivation practices

$\varepsilon$  = Stochastic term (Error term)

Based on the regression coefficients results shown in Table 4, the regression model equation can be written as follows:  $Y=1.553+0.157X_1+ \epsilon$ . From this model, it was established that a unit increase in students' motivation practices would cause an increase in student retention in public secondary schools by a factor of 0.157. This implies that there is a significant relationship between student motivation practices and retention of students in public secondary schools in Kisii County, Kenya. To test if the student motivation variable was a significant predictor of the student retention in schools, the use of p-value of the regression coefficient was employed. Since the p-value of the regression coefficient was less than the significance level of the study ( $p<0.05$ ), The conclusion was that that there was enough evidence to say that student motivation practices were significant predictors of student retention in public secondary schools in Kisii County, Kenya. Therefore, the null hypothesis that there is no statistically significant relationship between student motivation practices and students retention in public secondary schools in Kisii County, Kenya, was rejected.

#### 4.0 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

**Conclusion:** On the relationship between student motivation practices and retention of students in Public Secondary Schools in Kisii County, it was found out that there was a statistically significant relationship between the two variables. Consequently, the study proposes giving prizes to all stakeholders, motivating learners while teaching, verbal encouragement by teachers on a good performance in academic work, allowing democratic participation by all in the school, encouraging the spirit of teamwork in the school, encouraging educational trips by learners as being some of the student motivation practices that influence students' retention in Public Secondary Schools in Kisii County, Kenya.

**Recommendation:** The recommendations of this study were; material rewards should be given to students for them to do better in all areas in the school and for encouragement. This is since material rewards play a crucial role in encouraging learner's academic achievement and retention in the school. Also, the school management should encourage the spirit of teamwork in the school and more significantly in decision making on important matters affecting the school programmes.

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